

Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization

**Stevens Square Community Organization:
An NRP Retrospective**

A CONSORTIUM PROJECT OF: Augsburg College; College of St. Catherine; Hamline University; Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs; Macalester College; Metropolitan State University; Minneapolis Community College; Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization Program; University of Minnesota (Center for Urban and Regional Affairs; Children, Youth and Family Consortium; Minnesota Extension Service); University of St. Thomas; and Minneapolis community and neighborhood representatives.

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Stevens Square Community Organization: An NRP Retrospective

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Conducted on behalf of the Stevens Square Community Organization
April, 1999

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Introduction & Project Purpose

The Stevens Square/Loring Heights (SSLH) neighborhood was one of the first neighborhoods in Minneapolis to participate in the Neighborhood Revitalization Program. The NRP is a program developed by the City of Minneapolis as a way to give neighborhoods greater control over the issues addressed and public funding spent in their neighborhood. Neighborhoods are required to participate in planning process and develop an action plan with specific objectives and strategies. The final action plan for the Stevens Square neighborhood was approved just over five years ago, in June of 1993. Currently, the community and neighborhood organization is near the end of the implementation process.

The purpose of this project is to evaluate the NRP in the Stevens Square neighborhood¹. More specifically this evaluation aims to:

- determine the results and/or status of the plan's objectives that have been implemented, partially implemented or have not been acted upon;
- determine the impression and opinion that individuals actively involved in the NRP planning process five years ago, have of the program's impact now;
- determine the level of awareness, impression and opinion that neighborhood residents not involved with the original NRP process have of the programs and projects funded through the NRP
- determine options and methods for future evaluations

Supporting documents, and information about the methodology used for various portions of this project, are included in a separate appendix to this document.

Background

Stevens Square Community Organization is a non-profit, neighborhood organization that serves the Stevens Square/Loring Heights (SSLH) neighborhood in Minneapolis. Located just south of downtown, the official boundaries of the neighborhood are Interstate 94 on the north, Lyndale Avenue on the west, Franklin Avenue on the south, and Interstate 35W. Although not a very large geographic area, the neighborhood is the densest area in the City of Minneapolis with over 90 percent rental housing.

SSCO has been active in the neighborhood for approximately 25 years. The organization's major activities include neighborhood safety programs, community gardening projects, arts and events, general outreach and other programs, projects and activities as related to neighborhood issues.

As mentioned previously, the Stevens Square neighborhood was one of the first to develop an NRP plan, largely with the assistance and guidance of SSCO. Approved in June of 1993, the SSLH final action plan was presented in four main sections: Community Safety, Community Services, Community Environment and Community Development. Each section outlined a varying number of objectives and specific actions to meet those objectives. The plan included both objectives that received funding as well as objectives that did not receive any funding.

¹ For purposes of this report, "Stevens Square" and "SSLH" will be used interchangeably.

The objectives included in the plan are listed below by section and funding designation.

Safety

Funded: Safety coordinator, Police radios & other block patrol equipment, Lighting and fencing program

Nonfunded: Police storefront station, Alarm systems in public housing, Community resource exchange committee, Alcohol & noise ordinance enforcement

Services

Funded: Social services plan, Resident management activities at public housing

Nonfunded: Community service priorities as identified by services plan, Feasibility for community resource center, Youth activities as part of the social services plan

Environment

Funded: Greening fund, Trash containers, Nicollet Avenue streetscape, 17th St. Overlook, Bridge improvements, Stevens Square Park, Transit plaza

Nonfunded: Land use study, Traffic & parking study, Streetscape & landscaping study, Landscaping around public highrises, Historic alleyway lighting, Neighborhood cleansweep, Centralize trash, recycling & snow removal, Third Ave. window boxes, Renovate alleyways to pedestrain-ways, Bridge walkways, Interstate gateway

Development

Funded: Community development staff, SSCO office space, Feasibility study of a CDC, Marketing program, Neighbors publication, Commercial revolving loan fund, Specific commercial properties, Public parking facilities, Steven's Community Associates property, Rental rehabilitation loan program

Nonfunded: Encourage home ownership and construct new housing, Mortgage refinancing program

Elements of Evaluation

Financial

One of the first steps in this project was to update the financial status of the plan. This basically involved determining where the money had officially been allocated, where it may have been reallocated, what was spent and therefore what may still be available for further use under those original objectives or for reallocation. A spreadsheet summary of the finances, as of December 1998, is included as an appendix to this document. Staff at NRP and the Minneapolis Community Development Association was able to provide nearly all of this information. The staff at Riverside Bank also provided information about the commercial loan fund.

Looking at the financial status of the plan is important for several reasons. From an evaluative standpoint, determining where funds were actually spent is important for determining what was "accomplished." Since not all objectives included in the plan received funding, it is also important to have a basic understanding of where the available funds were originally allocated, to serve as some indicator of priority or importance.

Allocation of funding

As mentioned above, the plan was divided into four main sections. The amount of funding dedicated to each section varied widely. In relation to this, it is important to note that the NRP does require that neighborhoods allocate a certain, higher percentage of funding to housing &/or related objectives.

- The safety section included seven different objectives, three of which shared \$71,300 in funding. This amount represented approximately 1.7 percent of the total funding available to SSLH through the program.
- The services section included five objectives, two received funding, and a third was designated as an appropriate use of the contingency fund. The two funded objectives represented approximately 1.2 percent of the total available funds, or \$50,000.
- Objectives designated to address issues related to the environment received \$652,500, or 15.5 percent of the funding. Seven objectives, out of the total 18 objectives included in this section, received portions of this funding.
- The vast majority of funding was allocated to objectives included in the development section of the action plan. Ten of 12 total objectives received \$3,051,500 in funding. This represented 72.6 percent of the total \$4.2 million available to SSLH through the program.
- The contingency fund was established as a potential source of funding for objectives included in or alluded to in the plan. Four potential uses of these funds were specified in the original plans. Other uses of these funds would have to go through the NRP's official plan modification process.

Reallocations

Since plan approval, the majority of the funding has been utilized for the objective to which it was originally allocated. However, over the course of the plan's implementation, the SSLH Action Plan was modified on six different occasions. These modifications moved funding to and from various objectives within the plan; these modifications did not involve the addition of new objectives. The basic changes were:

- A \$14,000 decrease in the marketing allocation and a corresponding increase in funding for the Neighbors publication (August 1994)
- A \$25,000 decrease in the funding allocated to "specific commercial properties," and a corresponding increase in funding for the overlook project (August 1994)
- An elimination of the \$10,000 allocated to window boxes on 3rd Avenue, with a corresponding increase in the greening fund (July 1995)
- A \$9,859 decrease in funding for the CDC feasibility project with an increase for the same amount in Community Development Staff (December 1995)
- Funding for tree plantings in the Park, \$7,000, was transferred from the Park allocation to the greening fund to allow MN Green to do plantings in the Park (1994)

- Funding allocated for Third, Fourth and Franklin Avenues, totaling \$210,000, was reallocated to the Nicollet Avenue Streetscape project (July 1996)

At the time of this report, SSCO was in the process of modifying the action plan to reallocate available funding.

Funding spent & available

Nearly all of the \$4.2 million allocated to the SSLH neighborhood has either been spent or is under contract. However, it is important to note that nearly half of the original total funding was allocated to the two loan funds and is therefore essentially not "spent," but is dedicated to and available for those uses.

Funding that was not spent on designated objectives was generally due to a dependency on another organization or event. For example, funding allocated to improvements for the Nicollet Ave. bridge spanning Interstate 94 has not been used because the assumption was that this money should be used in conjunction with state funding and projects that have not yet developed. Funding allocated to the development of a parking structure was also assumed to have the funding support of additional parties and was also assumed to be necessary in relation to projected commercial development that did not occur.

As of December 1998, approximately \$400,000 dollars was still available for neighborhood use. This represents approximately 10 percent of the total original amount allocated to SSLH. Approximately half of this "available" money had originally been allocated to the plan's contingency fund; the other half had been allocated to specific objectives.

Within each section the status of funding is:

- Essentially all of the funding allocated to the safety and service objectives was spent.
- About 85 percent of the funding allocated to objectives related to the environment was spent. The remaining, available funds total approximately \$107,000.
- Just under half of the money designated as the contingency fund has been used, leaving \$223,550 still available.
- Over 95 percent of the money allocated to the largest funded section, development objectives, has been spent. Approximately \$82,000 has not been spent. This does not include the loan fund.

As mentioned previously, the status of funding in the development section can be misleading because over \$2 million dollars alone was dedicated to the residential and commercial loan funds. As of December 1998, approximately one-third of the \$1.5 million residential loan funds were available for loans. Approximately one-half of the \$500,000 commercial loan funds were available. The balance of these loan funds are either committed to outstanding loans or are non-recoverable funds that have been spent on interest payments, defaults, etc. SSCO has been exploring options for restructuring the loan programs so as to eliminate significant non-recoverable funds in the future. The nearly \$800,000 that is currently available in the loan funds was not considered in the total available funds mentioned previously or on the spreadsheet. All funds in the loan programs have been considered as "contracted" since they are essentially dedicated to that objective.

NRP Assessment Sheets

The status of the plan was also updated via "Strategy Assessment Report" forms that were provided by the NRP. These forms provide a basic framework for evaluating individual strategies by highlighting information about the resources used, results achieved, timeline, number of participants and additional implementation to occur.

For the purposes of this report, information to complete the forms was solicited from the "best" contacts familiar with each objective. This usually involved contacting one to three individuals. Obviously a shortcoming of this method is that some information or answers will be subjective. Some information was also hard to retrieve because it relied on individuals' memories versus written account or report.

Since the forms contain information specific to each objective, they are difficult to summarize. However, a brief summary regarding strategy implementation and the estimated number of participants is provided here. Each strategy was categorized as implemented "completely," "partially," or "not at all." A range of participants was also estimated, this estimate is generally not based on official records, and does not include individuals "affected" by strategies, but only those "participating." The completed forms are included as supporting materials provided to SSCO with this report.

Safety Objectives

- All of the objectives, and corresponding strategies, that received funding were completely implemented. The results of two of these strategies have created and/or strengthened ongoing programs in the block patrol and the lighting and fencing program.
- Of the non-funded strategies, one was completely implemented and three were partially implemented for various reasons.
- Information provided suggests there were anywhere from 165 to 290 individuals that participated in the safety objectives.

Services Objectives

- All of the funded strategies were completely implemented with one ongoing project, the results of the social services plan, i.e. the jobs project.
- Both of the non-funded strategies were completely implemented and were actually provided funding through the contingency fund.
- Information provided suggests there were approximately 175 - 180 participants involved with the services objectives.

Environment Objectives

- Four of the funded strategies were completely implemented with one ongoing project, the greening fund. The streetscape projects were classified as being partially implemented since the original funding was diverted to from four avenues to one. Two strategies related to bridge improvements and establishing a transit shelter were not implemented at all.

- Five of the non-funded strategies were completely implemented with three of the strategies utilizing the contingency fund. One strategy was partially implemented and five strategies were not implemented, one due to the reallocation of funds.
- Information provided suggests that there were anywhere from 310 to 470 participants involved with the environment objectives.

Development Objectives

- Seven funded strategies were completely implemented with two ongoing projects in the commercial and residential loan funds. Two projects were partially implemented and one project, the development of a parking structure, has not been implemented.
- One strategy that did not receive funding was implemented and one strategy was not implemented.
- Information provided suggests that there were approximately 85 - 110 participants involved with the development objectives.

Total participant estimates across all four sections are in the range of 735 to 1050 individuals.

Interviews

About 15 individuals were interviewed on a more in depth basis about their expectations, impressions and opinions of the NRP in SSLH. Most of these individuals had been fairly involved with the NRP planning process and have remained involved to different capacities over the past several years. Beyond these 15 individuals, some additional individuals were contacted and interviewed, but not according to the same specific format as the original group of interviewees.

While attempts were made to solicit a range of opinions and perspectives, it is important to note that a 1) relatively low number of persons were interviewed, and 2) SSCO and individuals close to the process provided the contact information. The questions utilized in these interviews and summaries of individual interviews are included as an appendix to this document.

Expectations for the NRP

The individuals interviewed had varying expectations and hopes about how they thought the NRP would impact the neighborhood. Overwhelmingly, the majority of those interviewed said they thought the NRP and associated funding would provide an opportunity to address crime issues and increase neighborhood safety. One resident said she "had immediate hopes of eliminating crime." Another interviewee said crime and safety are so important because "everything else" is predicated on people feeling safe in the community.

The issues mentioned most often after crime were improvements to the neighborhood's housing stock and commercial area. Several participants said they thought NRP resources could be used to address the "deterioration of buildings," maintenance of the "architectural fabric," and "appearance issues" that were facing the neighborhood. Along the same lines, participants said they thought the money would provide opportunities for improvements on Nicollet Avenue and economic revitalization for the commercial areas.

One resident said she saw the potential for getting Nicollet Avenue cleaned up and a better retail area, "a thriving commercial area."

A couple individuals said they viewed the NRP as an opportunity to create a sense of community. One individual said she saw the NRP as "an opportunity to create a sense of place, sense of identity.... I did see the advantage of creating a community." Although several participants commented on the tension and stress that had traditionally existed amongst groups within the neighborhood, one participant said he thought "if there was potentially a vehicle for finding common ground" between these groups, the NRP was it.

A couple other individuals said they thought the NRP would allow SSCO to build organizational capacity. One individual said NRP resources were important to get SSCO to a point where it could support itself by securing grants and other funding sources. "It is a circular problem, without the funds, the organization can't get the people [staff]; but without the people [staff] you can't secure or recruit the funds."

According to other participants, they expected the NRP would provide opportunities to increase neighborhood greening efforts, address the problems of the Van Dusen Mansion, make improvements to Stevens Square Park, improve neighborhood image and strengthen neighborhood social services.

Expected challenges

Although many individuals had high hopes for the NRP, several interviewees also said they foresaw challenges and problems associated with the program and its process. One resident said the challenge would be "how to bring in a truly representative group and even define who the constituents were." In Stevens Square it really got "back to the old dilemma of who is a citizen, a resident or a property owner." Along the same lines, other residents said the biggest issue would be who received the money after the plan was developed. One resident said he was very concerned about the interests of the property owners who had "collective mouths watering at the potential funds for their benefit."

In criticism of the NRP, one resident said "whenever you throw millions of dollars around you can put millions of dollars to good use or millions of dollars to less good use." He said the program was beneficial in theory, but would be a problem in practicality in Stevens Square. Another resident said he was simply very skeptical about the idea of transferring power from the "professionals downtown" to the amateurs in a neighborhood with many factions.

One resident said the process provided hope, "if we could ever get through the politics to get something done."

Impressions now

The impressions of what the NRP has done for the neighborhood swing the gamut. Some individuals have touted the Stevens Square NRP plan as "the best plan," "a watershed plan," and "one of the real success stories of the NRP citywide." One individual said there is "no other neighborhood with so much change, especially in terms of bricks and

mortar." Another individual said the NRP, "saved the neighborhood." But other individuals strongly disagree. One individual said the NRP has "done nothing" for the neighborhood. Most of these individuals indicated they particularly found the NRP process and participation in SSLH unfair, unrepresentative and unjust. According to one individual, "this became more important than the issues, but the issues then became important as related to these issues" because it affected how the money was going to be spent and what the priorities were. Since a central theme of the NRP is neighborhood participation and process, said one interviewee, this was, and is, a very big issue.

As for what has been accomplished, most interviewees cited about half a dozen results of the NRP that they see as positive. Mentioned most often, were the improvements that have been made in neighborhood safety and efforts to address crime. Individuals suggested the funds available for safety objectives have helped put in place the systems to promote neighborhood safety. The block patrol was mentioned specifically as an important vehicle for promoting neighborhood communication and safety, which go hand in hand. One participant said, the neighborhood has "made connections with the police that continue because it is an ongoing process. Just setting that foundation and keeping that going has been positive."

Improvements related to the neighborhood housing were also cited as a benefit of the NRP. According to one individual, the NRP gave property owners access to the funds needed to make building improvements that would improve the appearance and feel of SSLH. Beyond the physical improvements, interviewees said the increased participation and organization of property owners is beneficial to the health of the neighborhood, particularly in relation to the increased tenant screening that has, and should continue to, occur.

Several individuals said the growth of SSCO has been an important benefit of the NRP. One individual said, "a huge surprise to me is that the organization is much stronger. I thought once the NRP money was gone the organization would struggle, but that has not happened. It has ended up really growing." One individual said he hoped the NRP would establish the "organization as more of a vehicle to use to address neighborhood issues and concerns, an instrument for the community...it has done that, it's remarkable." According to one interviewee, it is important to recognize that plans had been developed in the past, but this was the first time the organization was able to implement a plan. Even with the funding, he said, this is unique from many other organizations participating in the NRP citywide.

Along the same lines, some individuals said a benefit of the NRP has been that it brought the community together, caused people to work together, and provided an opportunity to meet new people. Said one individual; "it created a more involved community. There was something to do, to work on, a mission." Other benefits noted by more than one interviewee included the greening projects, the 17th St. Overlook, the growth of SSCO as an organization, and the changes made to Stevens Square Park.

Interviewees cited various non-results or weaknesses of the plan. Individual complaints suggested weaknesses such as, the plan did not deal with crime enough; there was not enough funding or a plan for social services objectives; the 17th Street Overlook was a waste of money; and funding for SCA was unjust because they continue to raise rents after getting tax dollars for improvements.

Several individuals cited participation issues and the division within the neighborhood as the biggest challenge to the NRP. Several individuals said SSLH was faced with particular challenge, in relation to neighborhoods citywide, because the neighborhood has such high percentage of renters versus homeowners. Interviewees suggested this facilitated challenges to the process and therefore the plan.

Impressions of the process

When asked about the process, as with the overall impact of NRP, the responses from interviewees were extremely varied. One individual said "There was no process, it was controlled, manipulated, and subverted by a small group of persons who craved the money and the things that go along with it. It was a phony process." While another individual said it was "absolutely fair," and SSCO had made it easy for residents to get involved.

Overall, more of the individuals interviewed for this project did indicate they thought the process was fair. Those who felt favorably about the process said it was fair and characterized by broad representation. One individual said it was the classic challenge between renters and tenants, and to promote participation in general, but the process ended up being fair, or at least tried to be fair. One interviewee said there was something in the plan for everyone. "Minority opinions still made the plan; all ideas were given a voice.... It was definitely fair."

An individual with an alternative viewpoint said overall, the process was biased with some fair moments. "It is safe to say many felt that the process was controlled by property owners and the wealthy. Another individual said, ""We felt that the main issue was that there had not been adequate representation from the different groups that existed in the community, and not just the tenants versus the property owners, but the various racial and economic groups. The idea was to try to involve as many people as possible, but we felt that never happened. [We felt] that the decisions were primarily made by a small group of special interest decision-makers, particularly property owners."

The same individual said the manner in which the NRP process was handled in SSLH created outcomes that were no different than what would have occurred through traditional methods. "The same persons who had the ability to influence downtown ended up influencing in town." Another individual voiced a similar opinion, saying, "the NRP should be about letting the average guy have a voice; about having power structures be bottom-up versus top-down." Amongst those who found the system to be biased, one individual said it is a "poor system when it is set up for animosity and questionable results."

This extreme divergence in opinions ultimately led to a formal review of the neighborhood's NRP process. During a final review meeting for the neighborhood's action plan, a neighborhood resident presented a formal complaint to the NRP Implementation Committee. The complain alleged that SSCO had not honored its participation agreement with the NRP. The complaint asked that the plan be rejected, and that the process started over.

As a result of this complaint, the NRP established a three-person review team to conduct a formal administrative review. The review team held two meetings, one for each group to present its "argument." Both sides were also allowed to present written materials in support of their points. This type of review has never been conducted in any other neighborhood.

As a result of this process, the committee concluded that "SSCO did not fully implement the provisions of its participation agreement with the NRP, but it made many reasonable efforts to involve all segments of the community in the process." It also concluded that although the planning was not representative of the neighborhood, no one group appeared to be particularly disadvantaged in the plan.

As a result of these conclusions, the review team recommended that the SSLH plan be forwarded to the NRP Policy Board for further approval. The review team also recommended that SSCO make "appropriate modifications in the implementation process to ensure broader neighborhood participation."

A copy of the review team's official findings and recommendations is included as an appendix to this report. Additional information about the complaint, particularly information from the viewpoint of the citizens that filed the complaint, is also included in the appendix.

While several individuals interviewed referred to the challenges the process went through, all of these individuals said they felt the process was fair overall. One individual said the process was a constant struggle to determine what was best for the neighborhood; there were individuals bringing vested interests to the table and those became the issues. She said it was challenging to get organizations, groups and the public all involved.

One individual said, "we were kinda making it up as we went along, there was no template. There was so much diversity in terms of what people wanted." He said he thought "their intentions were very good, but there were so many people around the cookie jar."

Another individual said the expectations regarding how much community involvement could and would be a part of the NRP process were frustrating. She said she felt the organization was receiving a lot of pressure and criticism that it did not deserve and that was not justified. She said SSCO made many efforts to get the word out to recruit people

to get involved. Unfortunately, she said, SSCO could not ultimately control who got involved and those efforts needed to go both ways.

Planning ahead

Interviewees provided a variety of suggestions about changes that should be made prior to another round of the NRP, future planning processes, or simply to improve SSCO as an organization.

The biggest area where interviewees indicated there should be changes and improvements was related to outreach strategies. Several individuals said there needed to be more renter involvement, increased communication with concentrated populations - such as the public housing units or individuals in assisted-living situations, and more inclusion and involvement of all neighborhood residents in general. Decision-making bodies should be representative of the neighborhood, in terms of the renter-owner ratio in the neighborhood as well as other demographic characteristics of residents.

Individuals said timing is also an important issue in planning ahead for the second round of NRP or other projects. A couple of individuals said the neighborhood was in too much of a hurry to participate in the NRP; there was a sense of urgency. This sense of urgency may have lead the neighborhood and SSCO to get involved too soon, underestimating the difficulty of the process. With this experience, said one individual; SSCO can now be much more "thoughtful and evaluative" in terms of the pace of getting involved in planning and implementation.

As for the types of goals that were pursued through the NRP, participants provided a variety of suggestions. A couple participants recommended that future initiatives have a broader focus across all sectors, or geographical areas of the neighborhood. One individual in particular said that there was little or no focus given to the Clinton Sector of the neighborhood, which should be addressed. One participant also suggested that the neighborhood and SSCO remain realistic in its goals. One participant said, "instead of being asked to 'dream,' NRP and SSCO should tell community members to be more directive as to what are the needs of the community." On a similar note, one individual said, "a lot of the projects undertaken related to beautification and smaller projects; now we need to look at what will sustain the neighborhood."

Current issues

The majority of the current issues cited by the individuals that were interviewed echoed many of the original issues they said were facing the neighborhood at the outset of the NRP.

Housing issues and commercial business development were both cited by several interviewees. As related to housing, the issue most cited was the need for façade work, upgrades and general beautification. Other individuals stated the need to preserve the existing architecture in the neighborhood as well as the need to increase the amount of step-up housing and the general variety of housing options. As for the issues related to commercial development, interviewees said issues such vacant lots on Nicollet and the

condition of buildings need to be addressed. Some individuals said there needs to be more businesses and a different business mix on Nicollet Avenue. One individual said, "the biggest concern is bolstering the economic viability of Nicollet Avenue. There are lots of social services, but we need more beyond that. I would also like to see the neighborhood organization more proactive in economic development, specifically [addressing] the grocery store."

Several participants also cited increasing neighborhood safety and greenness as priorities. Although many individuals that were interviewed indicated that neighborhood crime has decreased, many said improving safety continues to be an ongoing issue. Along with maintaining and increasing greenness, participants said cleaner streets and alleys, and better trash pickup are important cleanliness issues that contribute to "greenness."

Some participants said improving the neighborhood's image is an important issue currently facing the neighborhood. Others also indicated strengthening SSCO and continuing to recruit quality staff are important current issues. Other issues also raised include the need for resources to support neighborhood social services and issues overlooked last time such as the window boxes on Third Avenue, neighborhood community center, creating a land bridge over the freeway and generally strengthening links to downtown.

Strategies

Participants had ideas about general strategies to address these issues, as well as the outreach challenges mentioned previously. Some of the ideas included:

Outreach Strategies

- Don't just post meetings, but explain them. Persons who are not already involved will not be intrigued unless there is more information provided with a flyer or advertisement
- Create thorough a mailing list; don't let be out of sight out of mind for those attending once but not again
- Utilize the SSCO newsletter
- Have property owners or building contacts inform residents on a more personal level beyond postings in buildings
- Do more doorknocking
- Create rules that increase/require participation
 - Require quorums
 - Utilize neighborhood polling booths for important elections &/or approvals; place them in apartment buildings and community gathering places
 - Require personal contact with X% of the neighborhood for future NRP or other planning processes
 - Require X% neighborhood approval before any plan is okayed
 - Only allow residents to vote; nonresidents could participate as visitors
 - Explore changes to the SSCO bylaws to promote greater resident involvement

Housing & Commercial Development

- Increase promotion of available loan programs
- Establish a neighborhood credit union, consider neighborhood currency
- Promote mixed-use development

Safety & Greenness

- Provide education for residents to encourage property clean-ups
- Promote more serious penalties for graffiti culprits
- Organize neighborhood-wide clean-ups

Image

- Utilize the SSCO website to promote the neighborhood
- Utilize a marketing/PR campaign
- Promote neighborhood activities via newspaper, TV, and radio

Strengthen SSCO

- Utilize a professional grant writer
- Get SAMOA involved with SSCO, have some representation of each organization involved with the other

General

- Do not conduct more studies

Focus Groups

Four focus groups were conducted in conjunction with this project. Two groups were designed to solicit information about issues of interest and concern to neighborhood residents. The other two groups focused more specifically on NRP projects and programs. The focus of these groups was to solicit information that would help determine residents' recognition or knowledge, and perception and assessment of NRP projects and programs. The questions utilized in the focus groups, as well as full summaries and further information about the methodology, are included as appendices.

Neighborhood Assessment

Neighborhood assets & challenges

One asset that participants stated almost immediately was the neighborhood's location, proximity to downtown, and the convenience that offered. Along with this, participants said the area is not only accessible to major freeways, but also easy, available bus service.

Participants said the diversity of the neighborhood, and access to diverse restaurants and businesses, was also an asset of the community. Beyond just ethnic businesses, one participant said, "Everything I need it nearby. I can hangout at the coffee shop, grab something at a restaurant, go shopping, whatever."

Participants also cited the area's architecture and classic buildings as a unique amenity to SSLH. The area's trees and greening efforts were cited as a plus as were the neighborhood activities and events such as Movies & Music and Fair in the Square.

Many participants saw crime as the biggest challenge facing Stevens Square. Individual impressions as to the level of crime varied greatly. Most individuals agreed that there is not a notable level of serious crime, there are high instances of misdemeanor crimes. As one participant said he does not "fear for his life," but felt the obvious presence of crime was disturbing. Drug trafficking was mentioned as an important issue.

"Problem" landlords were mentioned by some participants as a negative influence on the neighborhood's beautification and livability. Participants said a lack of maintenance with properties, even with simple things like a lack of snow shoveling, can have negative impacts on the residents of that building(s), but also the broader neighborhood.

The lack of parking, and issue of non-residents parking in the neighborhood to walk downtown, were also stated as neighborhood challenges. The empty retail lots in the Mall Center and along Nicollet were also stated. A couple of participants said the changing demographics and new immigrants coming into the neighborhood pose new social issues and challenges, particularly as related to language barriers and cultural differences.

Changes to be made & strategies

Participants suggested the various issues cited above are generally the types of things they would like to be changed in this neighborhood. Specifically they thought there should be continued efforts to address crime, particularly by adding more lighting and fencing. Participants said they would like to see residents confident to use the park at all hours, day and night.

Another suggestion provided and/or supported by most participants was for SSCO to continue to increase awareness of SSCO programs and projects among residents. In addition, some participants said they would like to see more opportunities to "sit down and talk like this" through focus groups or other community events and activities.

As for strategies to promote changes, participants suggested generally getting more residents involved and aware of the activities and issues in the neighborhood, both positive and negative, would certainly help to address most issues. Several participants through SSCO should do more outreach to make the organization more visible. They said they did not think that using flyers was a good way to publicize events or the organization. Individuals suggested doing outreach within buildings more by establishing a contact within each building that would promote SSCO events or holding more meetings within buildings. They said some type of personal contact was very positive. Said some participants; "Even just getting the call to come to this meeting was great."

On a more specific level, participants suggested SSCO provide important phone numbers and information in the newsletter to encourage residents to call the police in relation to crime and the city in relation to snow shoveling or other ordinance violations.

Participants also thought the block patrol could help report snow shoveling violations. Generally participants thought more lighting and fencing could help deter crime.

Neighborhood stereotypes

Focus group participants' perceptions of SSLH, prior to moving in, really varied according to their knowledge of the area. Some participants said their perception initially became worse after they moved in because neighbors or landlords told them "horror stories" about the area. All of the participants however, said their impression of the neighborhood has improved during their time in the neighborhood. Most residents suggested they were quite happy living in the area.

All of the participants agreed that the perception of individuals outside of Stevens Square is very negative. Residents told stories of parents crying when they brought them to the neighborhood to move in and co-workers saying, "you live there? Are you feeling safe there?" Most residents said it usually takes friends and family a few visits to the neighborhood to feel comfortable there and breakdown existing stereotypes.

Role of a neighborhood organization & SSCO

Participants said a major function of a community organization should be to bring people together to meet other neighborhood residents, have fun, discuss and debate issues, generate new ideas, and generally get involved with their community. One participant however, said it is important for any community organization to not "wear down" its volunteers. She said SSCO should always try to balance any business-like meeting with a social event. Along the same lines, participants said a community organization should strive to involve all community members and not just rely on the same core people all the time. The organization should develop projects, programs, or events that appeal to a variety of interests and people.

Participants said a community organization should also focus on issues of crime and safety. In addition, a neighborhood organization should focus on improving the community environment and beautification efforts. One participant said beautification and clean-ups are important to a community because "what it looks like is often what it is."

Several participants said they did not feel that they knew enough about the organization to make any strong assessments. However, in relation to their lack of knowledge, several participants suggested SSCO continue to focus on improving and increasing outreach and communication efforts. They said the newsletter is likely to be a positive addition to the organization's outreach. Participants also suggested more doorknocking.

Other participants said they thought the existing programs and projects were very positive and fulfill neighborhood needs, particularly the greening program, block patrol and community events. They thought the block patrol was very beneficial and would only encourage SSCO to increase the block patrol's work at night. Participants also thought Movies & Music, and other neighborhood events, were very good and important to continue in the neighborhood.

NRP Evaluation

Project/program awareness & benefits

Several participants in these focus groups were familiar with neighborhood projects and programs including the greening projects, block patrol and safety committee, the lighting and fencing program, the community mural project, and the Movies & Music series. Also mentioned, although not as frequently, were the 17th Street Overlook, Stevens Square Park improvements, the jobs program, the SSCO Herald, and other neighborhood events. Outside the community mural project, each of these are neighborhood projects that have been assisted by NRP funding.

Participants were also asked specifically about several NRP funded projects. General reactions were positive or neutral. Since these comments are difficult to summarize, these specific comments are included with the appendix information provided with this report.

Participants said these programs benefit the neighborhood because they help create a sense of community, create a positive environment, and provide an opportunity for community members to get to know each other. Much of the feedback focused on the impact of the greening projects, block club, and community events.

One participant said, "When I was looking for apartments and I came to this area I saw people out in the gardens and I thought 'people actually care about this area.' That was actually one of the big deciding factors for me to move here because it wasn't just people in their own apartments, people were actually taking care of the area." Another participant said the community programs and projects, "create an environment that is very different than downtown. It is nice to live in an area with trees, flowers, lights – a place where I feel good about coming back to. It adds a lot, it really does."

Several participants said the biggest benefit of these neighborhood projects and programs is that it allows people to meet each other. One participant said SSLH is a place "where you see people talking to each other." "What I have really, really learned to love about Stevens Square is the community involvement, things like the winterlights and the carriage rides and getting together and meeting people. I think that can keep a neighborhood together faster than anything," said one participant.

Suggested improvements

Focus group participants provided suggestions for project/program improvement. Most of these suggestions focused on increasing outreach, communication, and knowledge of SSCO activities. One participant said, "I don't think I was really aware of what was going on until the newsletter started arriving and they inserted the calendar."

Several participants suggested that SSCO also focus more outreach on more interpersonal communication such as doorknocking and phone calling. They said this would likely be more effective in raising awareness than flyering. Participants said that was one reason they were aware of and willing to attend the focus groups, because they were contacted

individually. Other participants said more personal contact would also be helpful in addressing the notable turnover rate in the neighborhood.

Few, if any, suggestions focused directly on changing the structure or purpose the current projects. Some suggestions were made as to further improvements that could be made to the park, specifically adding on the structures already built and improving park maintenance.

Additional programs/projects

One group focused largely on improving economic development efforts in the neighborhood. Participants said they would like to see increased emphasis on business retention and recruitment. Specifically they said improvements are necessary for the Mall Center and the grocery store. Participants said the grocery store is a real weakness for the neighborhood, as it is dirty and poorly managed. Individuals in this group, as well as some participants in the other group, also suggested that some development occur in the empty lot next to Johnson Meat Company.

Several participants said they would also like to see greater efforts to remove graffiti from neighborhood buildings, and keep it removed. Other issues mentioned included: utilizing some of Plymouth Church's parking to help business development on Nicollet Avenue, working with the block patrol to enforce snow shoveling ordinances, and developing "helping hand" cards, with shelter and social service information, to give to panhandlers in the neighborhood.

Role of a neighborhood organization & SSCO

Similar to the opinions cited by the other focus group participants, several participants said the main role of a community organization should be to promote provide opportunities for neighborhood communication. Along the same lines, participants said an important function of a neighborhood organization is to organize and facilitate opportunities for neighborhood residents and others to come together and meet new people.

Participants also emphasized a community organization's need to solicit information from neighborhood residents. They said a community organization should, "try to reach out and offer people a chance to do what we are doing tonight in some way, not necessarily through a focus group, but have some input into what the organization is doing and to have a place or way to go and do that."

Participants also said a community organization should also strive to improve neighborhood safety and the neighborhood environment, specifically the appearance of the area.

As for SSCO's performance as a neighborhood organization, several participants agreed that they have seen many positive changes in the neighborhood that they assume SSCO has had some influence upon. Another participant said they thought the organization does a good job of holding a variety of community gatherings and events. Some

participants said they thought even more events could be developed, specifically some youth-related events.

Other participants did express some concern about the level of communication and awareness about community events, programs and projects within the neighborhood. Participants said they thought the SSCO newsletter would help improve neighborhood communication. Several participants, however, agreed that SSCO should continually try to improve neighborhood communication and outreach.

Conclusions

The activities undertaken by this report and the methods of evaluation utilized suggest the NRP's impact in the Stevens Square neighborhood has been largely positive. Funding was largely spent on the objectives that received the original allocations. The fact that little funding was reallocated or left unused suggests that SSCO and the involved residents have found these original objectives to remain appropriate over the past five years of the implementation process. Twice as many objectives were completely implemented as those objectives that remain partially implemented or not implemented at all.

The majority of individuals interviewed throughout the course of this project have found the NRP's impact in SSLH to be very positive and beneficial. Individuals have said that Stevens Square and SSCO developed "the best plan," and that the neighborhood is "one of the real success stories of the NRP citywide." The focus group participants, although somewhat less knowledgeable of the NRP specifically, also provided positive feedback about their impressions of the neighborhood, SSCO, and the organization's projects, programs, and events.

A particular benefit of the NRP has been that key programs have been developed and established for SSCO. These programs would include the greening program, block patrol, the commercial and residential loan programs. These programs give SSCO a tool to continue to address some of the main issues raised by individuals that were interviewed or participated in the focus groups. On a similar point, SSCO as the director of these programs and other projects has become a more established entity that can also benefit the neighborhood into the future. Said one interviewee of the growth of SSCO in the past five years; "it is like night and day."

The NRP has not however, been a completely positive occurrence in this community. As referred to in the portion of this report summarizing the interviews conducted, there were – and continue to be – some strong feelings about the NRP process and the types of outcomes that have resulted from the NRP. This report did not look at that issue significantly because of time constraints and because the background and contact information provided largely did not focus on that issue. As there are two sides to every issue, more evaluation and investigation into this the problems and complaints associated with the NRP process would likely be very valuable. On the one hand, there will never be complete agreement on any community issue, even in a community as relatively small as Stevens Square. However, on the other hand, when it comes to community work, a

sense of fair process and equality among residents is important. From the work done in this report, it is difficult to make specific determinations about this issue.

In relation to the objectives receiving funding, it is interesting to note that safety was overwhelming cited as the most important concern five years ago, but it was the section of the plan which received the least amount of funding. This may be a function of several factors. Since development objectives received the most funding, the low level of funding for safety objectives may be a function of the influence of the involved property owners that was alleged by those who had problems with the NRP process. This emphasis on development is also, however, a function of NRP requirements for certain levels of funding to address development, "bricks and mortar," issues.

The lower level of funding for safety objectives may also be a function of where money is deemed most useful. While safety may be a priority, it may not be able to be addressed by funding versus other issues that may. Lastly, the level of funding for safety, or any of the objectives, represents the fact that several types of strategies are needed to address issues in urban neighborhoods. While funding may go to greening efforts, those efforts in turn will address crime and safety issues.

Due to the complexity of crime and safety issues, the level of funding may not in fact correspond with priority. However, for future processes, it is important to note that more of the objectives that received funding were "completely implemented," than those objectives that were not funded.

The information provided by the focus groups in particular suggests that neighborhood issues will largely remain the same. Just as neighborhood safety and crime, and economic development and housing issues were the major concerns of individuals involved at the outset of the NRP process five years ago, they continue to be the concern of many neighborhood residents. Several individuals said they felt five years of efforts supported by the NRP have made an impact in these areas, but there is still more to be done. The issues and challenges facing urban neighborhoods continue to be complex.

The challenges facing community organizations such as SSCO also tend to remain the same over time, particularly outreach. The NRP process five years ago was faced with challenges related to outreach and facilitating community involvement; focus group participants said increasing and improving community outreach and involvement should be a notable focus of SSCO. The challenge for neighborhood organizations striving to have "successful" outreach is that there is always more to do and never enough done. This is not likely to change, but must be managed by organizations such as SSCO.

Lastly, another interesting point came out of the neighborhood focus groups. That point is that the less-involved neighborhood residents were more positive about the neighborhood and the challenges facing the community than may be expected. Individuals closely involved with any issue or project are often able to see both the extreme positives and the extreme negatives of their efforts. Most neighborhood residents appeared to be largely positive about the neighborhood and certainly did not have many extreme negative opinions about many of the issues, programs, or projects in

the Stevens Square neighborhood. For those individuals very involved with the SSLH community they can take note again that from any given individual's perspective there will always be more to do and never enough being done.

Further Evaluation

Since the NRP has had such a large impact on the Stevens Square neighborhood, this project also explored options for further, future evaluation. Evaluations can be conducted in several different ways, generally focusing on quantitative or qualitative data, or a combination of both. The type of evaluation SSCO may utilize in the future will depend on the available resources, funding, staff and data resources. An additional constraint on conducting a quality evaluation is the need for baseline or comparison data. Much of the public data that is often used for evaluations is only available for the current year. Without any historical data previously gathered by SSCO it may be a challenge to determine or assess any changes that have occurred. A final constraint on conducting evaluation is the amount of time it takes. Gathering data, whether doing fieldwork or working with public agencies, can be very time consuming.

Several evaluation ideas are presented below. They offer some suggestions about the types of variables that could or should be monitored in an evaluation. Some information is also offered about the data sources that could be utilized.

Handbook for Navigating through the Commercial Corridor Process

This handbook, prepared for Neighborhood Planning for Community Revitalization (NPCR), is a guide for groups working to revitalize commercial corridors. In addition to the planning and implementation information provided, also includes an evaluation worksheet entitled "Measures for Successful Streetscapes." Although the form refers to streetscape improvements specifically, many of the variables included for measurement, tracking and evaluating can apply to a larger area beyond a specific corridor. The broad areas to evaluate are business vitality, public value issues, and movement of people and goods. Within these areas are variables such as vacancy rates, cleanliness, crime statistics, traffic counts, etc. One area of focus that is missing from this worksheet is housing. Additional variables would have to be developed to account for the significant portion of SSLH that is dedicated to housing. A copy of this handbook has been provided to SSCO with this report.

National Main Street Program

The Main Street Program is a national program developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and funded by Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Similar to the Handbook, evaluation strategies utilized by the program focus on factors affecting commercial corridors. Some additional measures included in Main Street evaluation are: number of building permits issued, market values of land and buildings, number of new jobs created and wage of jobs, and public investment in avenue/area.

Neighborhood Sustainability Indicators Guidebook

This guidebook, produced for the Urban Ecology Coalition by the Crossroads Resource Center, has been developed to assist neighborhood groups and residents define the neighborhood indicators appropriate for monitoring and evaluating their neighborhood. Four types of indicators were developed: data poetry indicators – largely for internal use; core indicators – internal and external use; background indicators – external use; and deep sustainability indicators – internal and external use. These indicators provide a mix of quantitative and qualitative factors to evaluate. A copy of this guidebook has been provided with this report.

Interviewees' Potential Indicators of Change

Individuals interviewed for this project also provided some ideas as to what factors an NRP evaluation should be based on. They suggested a variety of potential "indicators of change" or potential measures that could be used to measure and evaluate the impact of the NRP. As mentioned previously, some indicators may be more measurable/quantitative than others may, and therefore, these ideas are presented in two groups below.

More measurable indicators:

- Number of people involved in planning processes &/or community events
- Number of new investors in the neighborhood
- Property values & sale prices
- Number of bidders on properties for sale
- Number of physical improvements & rehab done to buildings, housing or commercial
- Changes in specific properties
- Crime statistics, police calls and reported offenses
- Housing measures
 - Number of late charges on rent
 - Number of damage reports
 - Turnover rate
- Number of flower beds

Less measurable indicators:

- Level of residents' sense of belonging & perception of the neighborhood
- People's comments
- Level of neighborhood communication
- Number of word-of-mouth referrals for housing
- Level of SSCO activity & participation in coalitions
- Strength of organizations, ability of organizations & businesses to borrow money
- Neighborhood image
- Comparison to alternatives - what would have happened if nothing done

NRP/Whittier Evaluation

Perhaps the most appropriate type of evaluation for SSCO would be one similar to the evaluation that is currently being conducted for the Whittier neighborhood. This evaluation is also focusing on the NRP's impact in that neighborhood. It is being directed by a consulting group hired by the NRP, in conjunction with the Whittier

Alliance, and is focusing largely on qualitative analysis with some supporting quantitative work.

This evaluation is also utilizing the Strategy Assessment Reports that were utilized for this project. For the Stevens Square project, information for the forms was provided by one to three individuals per strategy. The Whittier evaluation is looking at each strategy more exhaustively to develop a more accurate assessment of the strategy's impact. Multiple personal and written sources are being employed, however the framework is the same. Strategies are assessed based on factors such as:

- "what was done"
- "results achieved"
- financial resources designated & used – and sources
- the number of participants
- when the strategy was implemented
- what still needs to occur

As mentioned previously, a copy of this form is provided in the appendix.

This type of evaluation may be most appropriate for several reasons. Perhaps most importantly, the NRP is involved in the evaluation, which would provide SSCO with financial and staff resources. According to staff at NRP, the organization may be interested in working with the Stevens Square neighborhood to conduct further evaluation once they finish working with the Whittier neighborhood.

This evaluation may also be appropriate for SSCO because it focuses on the specific strategies of the NRP action plan. In this way, the evaluation can focus in on the objectives that were determined by the action plan and assess to what extent those objectives have been met. A broader assessment of the neighborhood would likely serve as less of an evaluation tool and more of an inventorying or "status check." This type of assessment or "status check" may have value of its own.

Data Sources

Some pieces of data that correspond with the suggestions of the above evaluation formats are available through the Minneapolis Assessor's Office. Current year information is available for area zoning, land use, assessed property and building values, property sales data, and building condition rankings.

This information can be purchased at a rate of \$40/hour for the time it takes to assemble the data. Compiling information for the entire neighborhood may take four-six hours. However, if the neighborhood planner requests this information, it will be compiled for free. Information accessed via the neighborhood planner will take longer to receive. This information is not available for any years prior to the current year information.

The Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) at the University of Minnesota is also in the process of obtaining parcel level assessor's data for the entire City of Minneapolis. This could provide SSCO with another alternative for obtaining this information.

The *State of the City* report, a publication of the city planning offices, provides a variety of information not only about land use and property information, but also about crime, demographic, and school statistics. Most information is presented by community versus neighborhood. Stevens Square for example, would be in the central community. Some information is also presented by neighborhood. Information presented at the community level is presented as exact statistics; neighborhood information is presented as a range of values. The State of the City can be obtained through the Minneapolis Planning Department and is also available at CURA. This resource is available for past years.

The Code For crime analysis office of the Minneapolis Police Department can provide crime data for specific geographic areas throughout the city. Data would include service calls as well as recorded incidents in an area. This information is organized by crime grids utilized by the police. These grids may or may not correspond well to any given neighborhood boundaries. This information is available going back to 1990. As it is an analysis office, the information should be very accessible and the some analysis may be provided with raw data.

School data is also available and published bi-annually by The Urban Coalition. This data provides information about area demographics, population, assisted lunch programs and other related variables. This information should also be relatively accessible through the school district, although receiving it directly from the school district may take some time. The published information is available back to 1995.

Public information about building permits and public infrastructure expenditures should also be available for the neighborhood. Information about the number and value of building permits issued for properties in the neighborhood should be available through the city licensing and inspection offices. The Minneapolis Public Works Department can provide information about the amount of money spent on neighborhood infrastructure improvements.

Surveys are an additional resource for accessing data, particularly data related to the more qualitative indicators suggested previously. The Minnesota Center for Survey Research (CSR) provides assistance to organizations looking to develop and implement surveys. Depending on the level of services provided, the director at CSR said written survey work done for a neighborhood the size of Stevens Square would likely cost in the range of \$1500-2000. Some advising is available at no cost.

One resource the director suggested may be useful for future SSCO surveys or focus groups is a reverse directory. These directories, which are available at CURA or the University of Minnesota's Wilson Library, allow users to look up individual's by address and/or telephone number, versus relying on standard mailing or contact lists.

Recommendations

Some specific recommendations resulting from this project are highlighted below.

1. As a result of the information presented in this report, it does not appear necessary, with some specific exceptions (highlighted below), to conduct further evaluations of the NRP's impact in Stevens Square. The information presented in this report should serve as a resource for SSCO to utilize in grant applications, organizational and neighborhood marketing materials. Although the vast majority of the information is anecdotal, the opinions of neighborhood residents are an invaluable piece of information.

In addition to the fact that the information collected is already an important resource, further evaluation of the overall NRP in SSLH may not be appropriate because it would require substantial funding, staff time, and other resources. Evaluations that utilize public data, as further NRP evaluation likely would, can simply be very time consuming and challenging. In addition to these factors, there is very little baseline data available for the SSLH neighborhood. Developing a framework for future evaluations may be more beneficial than focusing on further NRP evaluation.

2. Further evaluation should be conducted and/or considered in a few distinct areas.
- A. The SSCO staff and board of directors should pursue further evaluation and/or investigation of the issues and circumstances surrounding the complaint lodged about the NRP planning process.

This report did not significantly explore this issue, but it would likely provides many "lessons learned" for the neighborhood. Although most individuals seem pleased with the results of the NRP, process is also very important, particularly at the neighborhood level.

- B. Beyond process issues, any further evaluation should focus on evaluating specific programs. This type of evaluation, looking at the block patrol or commercial loan program for example, would provide immediate opportunity for SSCO to make positive changes.

Program or project evaluation may also be more appropriate for addressing issues at the neighborhood level. It is difficult to prove causality in a neighborhood-wide evaluation, NRP-related or otherwise, in light of the other influential factors within the metro area.

3. If a broader neighborhood-wide, NRP-wide evaluation is determined appropriate, SSCO should work with the NRP for assistance. As mentioned previously, NRP-involvement would provide financial and staff resources as well as experience. The potential political interests and biases of the NRP should be recognized if this type of evaluation is employed.

4. As suggested above, SSCO should determine the baseline indicators or variables the organization would like to monitor in the future. These indicators, or variables, should include a mix of quantifiable and qualitative measures. Establishing this type of

evaluation format would be particularly appropriate if a second round of the NRP is approved. However, this type of evaluation, or neighborhood monitoring, would be beneficial in relation to any project, program, or just basic knowledge. For example, it may be useful to develop a standard survey or focus group format that could be utilized on an annual or biannual basis.

5. SSCO should assess its outreach tactics and strategies to determine its strength and weaknesses in this area. Outreach is an ever-present challenge for any community group, and it was an important issue in both the focus groups and the interview group. SSCO should continually try to develop new, innovative, and fun ways to disseminate information to the community and get them involved. Some of the suggestions in this report may provide some new ideas.

6. As suggested previously SSCO should develop a method for an annual "community check-in." This "check-in" could be conducted in the form of a survey or focus group. It would allow SSCO to obtain information from the community in a regular, constant manner.

7. The final recommendation is particularly related to the previous suggestion and other suggestions related to outreach. SSCO should recognize that as more community input is solicited, the community will likely push the organization to address a greater variety of issues. The organization needs to not only continually assess what the neighborhood concerns and issues are, but also where the neighborhood organization is focusing its energies, achieving success, where it wants to go, and what capacity it has to do so.